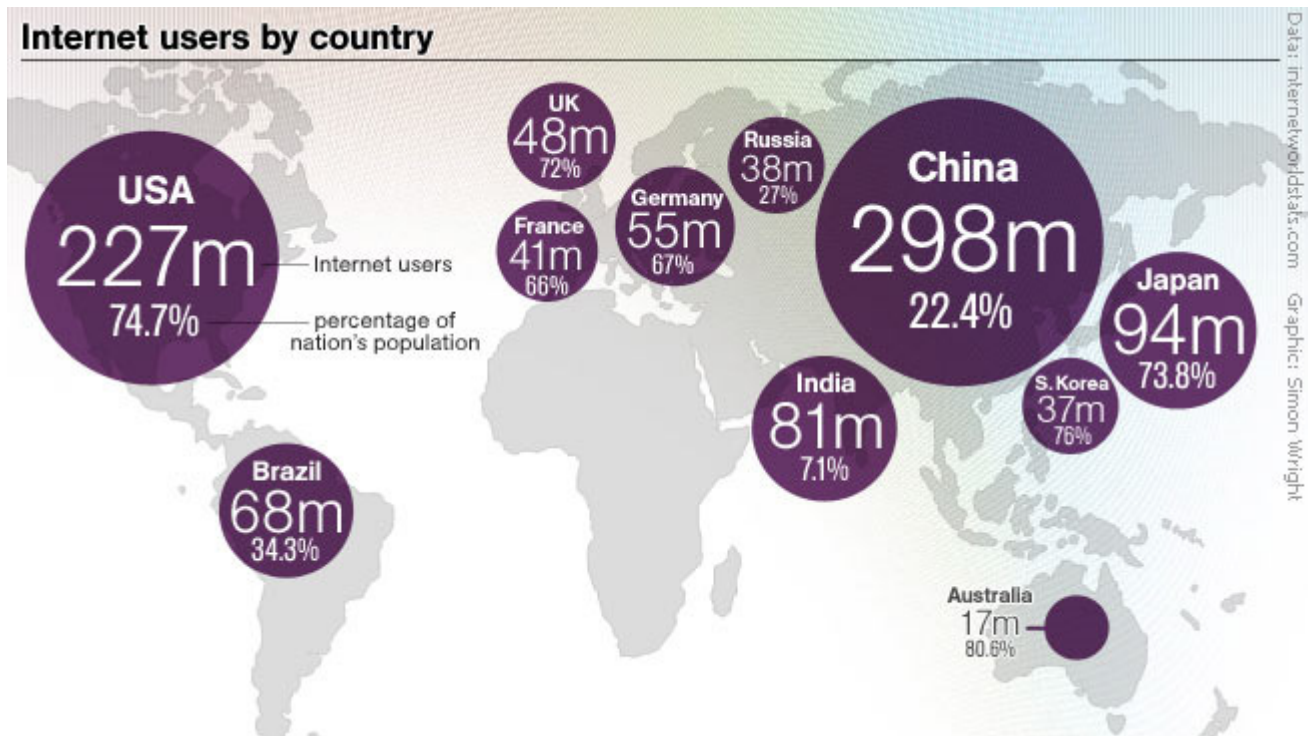


Latest news

How big is the internet?

By staff writersNEWS.com.auJuly 30, 2009 01:55pm



- Web addresses dwarf global population
- Over 31,000 years to read them all
- **Technology:** 40 years of the internet

THE internet has permeated everything from buying to banking to bonking.

But just how big is it?

Microsoft's Bing team puts the amount of web pages at "over one trillion".

And Google has already indexed more than one trillion discrete web addresses.


There are more addresses than there are people on Earth. The current global population stands at more than 6.7 billion.

That means there are about 150 web addresses per person in the world.

Translated: If you spent just one minute reading every website in existence, you'd be kept busy for 31,000 years. Without any sleep.

Bing was more generous with its estimate for those who take more time to read.

"An average person would need six hundred thousand decades of nonstop reading to read through the information," it said.

 The Punch: If you could only visit one, which would it be?

Number of users

Mark Higginson, director of analytics for Nielsen Online, said the global online population had jumped 16 per cent since last year.

"Approximately 1.46 billion people worldwide now use the internet which represents a solid 16 per cent increase from the previous year's estimate (1.26 billion in 2007)," he told news.com.au.

The largest internet population belongs to China, which claimed this week to have more users online – 338 million – than there were people in the US.

However InternetWorldStats.com (IWS), a website that combines multiple data sources, claims China's online population is more like 298 million, just a few million shy of overtaking the US population.

"With the rates of India and China still quite low, there is ample room for growth in the coming decade," Mr Higginson said.

Measuring the online population can be tricky. There are servers, users, per capita numbers, and penetration percentages to evaluate. It's an epic-scale guessing game using a series of sources to get just one number.

IWS combines data from the UN's International Telecommunications Union, Nielsen Online, GfK and US Census Bureau.

Its latest global figures puts the number of internet users in the world at 1,596,270,108.

That's just 23.8 per cent of the estimated 6,0706,993,152 people in the world.

But it changes every day.

"In terms of the future, we anticipate mobile to contribute significantly to internet usage," Mr Higginson said.

"In the US, the number of people accessing the internet through mobile devices grew 74 per cent between February 2007 and February 2009."

How we size up

According to IWS, the top 5 countries with the most internet users are:

- 1 - China (298,000,000 users, or 22.4% of their population)
- 2 – US (227,190,989, or 74.7%)
- 3 – Japan (94,000,000, or 73.8%)
- 4 – India (81,000,000, or 7.1%)
- 5 – Brazil (67,510,400, or 34.4%)

Australia comes in at 25th, with 16,926,015 internet users.

But we zoom all the way up to 7th place if we measure what percentage of the population uses the internet – a whopping 80.6 per cent, according to IWS.

"The Australian online population has now reached maturity in terms of the number of people online and their experience using the internet," Mr Higginson said.

"Despite this fact, the rate of internet participation, Australia-wide, increased notably for the first time in several years," he said, adding that the latest Nielsen statistics showed it had jumped 6 percentage points to 86 per cent.

However, even experts aren't keen to guess when every person in the world will be online.

"It's too hard to tell," Mr Higginson said.

Comments on this story

John Posted at 9:03am today

Have you multiplied China's numbers by the percentage of websites accessible by them?

Nigel of sydney Posted at 8:53am today

Frank of adelaide and Andre of Maine USA. You both have put forth some great ideas. Might not agree 100%, but this is what the internet is all about. Go forth and spread the web.

Jon of Melbourne Posted at 8:34am today

If you travel to Japan...take a laptop. Internet cafes are few and far between. Amazing.

The Original Stevo of Adelaide Posted at 8:28am today

All those tubes are the cause of global warming.

Big Fella Posted at 3:27am today

We only really need one website. We've all been there. icanhascheezburger.com

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